

Oral History Interview with

EDWARD MORGAN

Saturday, Sept. 25, 1999

At Skyland Conference Hall
66th Reunion of the Shenandoah Chapter
of the
Civilian Conservation Corps

Interviewer: Carrie Janey

Transcribed by: Gloria Updyke

Shenandoah National Park
Luray, VA

Original manuscript on deposit at
Shenandoah National Park Archives

INDEX

	<u>page</u>
Appalachian Trail	2
Blackfoot reservation	3
Camp life	4
Pranks	6
Camp NP-1, Skyland	2
Canada	3
CCC	
Benefits	5
Closing the camp	2
Joining up	1
Training	2
Coal mining	4
Culver City, PA	1
Germany	4
Glacier Park	3
Going west	2
Great Depression	6
Military, preparation for	4
Montana	3
Mountain families	7
New Cumberland	2
North/South conflict	5
Pennsylvania	5
Pollock	7
Ranger station	3
Recreation	
Baseball	4
Weekends in town	3, 4
St. Mary's Lake, Lower	3
St. Mary's Lake, Upper	3
Work	
Cutting firewood	3
Daily schedule	3
Forest fires	3
Road work	2

Transcription

CJ: Tell us for starters, where you were born and lived.

EM: Uh, I was born in Culver City, PA. 1920.

CJ: 1920.

EM: September 24.

CJ: 24? So you just had a birthday?

EM: Yeah, yesterday.

CJ: Happy birthday.

EM: Right down here all, all day yesterday.

CJ: So, um what did your parents do?

EM: Well, my dad was a coal miner 'til the Depression came.

CJ: Mm hm.

EM: My mother was a housekeeper.

CJ: So the Depression hit your family pretty bad.

EM: Mm hm.

CJ: So when did you hear about the CCC?

EM: I didn't, I just said I'm going in.

CJ: Oh, really. How did that come about?

EM: I don't know. Because, [_____]. And my parents were there on relief. And that's what they did.

CJ: So were you in the city, or were out in a...?

EM: In a town.

CJ: In a town?

EM: Yes, full time.

CJ: And they told you that you were going to be shipped off to, to Shenandoah for a bit. And what year was that?

EM: Mm hm. They didn't say when.

CJ: They didn't say when?

EM: Um, they sent some papers. They told me when to be at Pottsville, to get the train.

CJ: And where'd they send you first?

EM: Um, I think, I'm not sure, I think I went in to New Cumberland. And from there I came down to Skyline Drive.

CJ: And which camp were you in here?

EM: Camp 1.

CJ: NP-1 at Skyland. And what year was that?

EM: '39.

CJ: '39. So you were at the tail end of the CCC here? A lot had been done already?

EM: Yeah. The year when I got here, I think uh, the Appalachian Trail. And then uh, we was working the road going into one of these lodges, along the Drive here.

CJ: Mm hmm.

EM: And uh, they closed up the camp, and they gave us a choice – either stay on at Skyline Drive, or drop them in town.

CJ: So you could have gone to another camp?

EM: Yeah.

CJ: Here?

EM: So I decided I'd go out west, see what it was like. And after I got out there, well, I liked it.

CJ: You did?

EM: Yeah.

CJ: So what types of, what was your daily schedule like here?

EM: We's uh, taking care of the ranger station with uh, firewood. And so there was a group of us, we was cuttin' firewood, like you saw in the picture there.

CJ: Mm hmm.

EM: And uh, the weekend, we'd had to, we'd load the truck up on Friday. Saturday we took it to the, ranger station.

CJ: Mm hmm.

EM: And unload and then come back in again. One trip took us from the camp up in uh, Canada, that [____] get to the ranger station, in that one town. And then unload the wood, we went to camp again, an' cut some more. And then um, if there's any forest fires, we fought out in them. And it got to a danger point, we'd put on standby.

CJ: Mm hmm.

EM: An' uh, as the picture shows there, the train we had fight that. One place we bedded down at a lake, we got awake the next morning, the lake was up to our feet.

CJ: Hmm.

EM: Why it came up, I don't know.

CJ: Hmm. So what was the biggest difference between the Shenandoah camps and the Montana camps?

EM: Um, there's more doing here than there was out there.

CJ: Really, but did you work for a national park or a state park?

EM: Yeah, Glacier Park.

CJ: Glacier?

EM: Yeah, we uh, the station there between uh, Upper St. Mary's River, er, Lake, and Lower St. Mary's Lake. See, see them in the middle of the river. And across the river from us, why, there's a Blackfoot reservation.

CJ: Oh really? So how long were you in the CC's out in Montana?

EM: 6 months.

CJ: 6 months. So you were only in 1 year total?

EM: Not quite.

CJ: Not quite? So what did you do after you left?

EM: Well I come home, and uh, just did a little work. See my father and I, we was mining coal. And, we stayed and uh, war broke out, and I was called up in the draft.

CJ: And where did you go?

EM: Mortina, California. And I was out there until, the Germans made the breakthrough. I was taken out of the airforce and put in the infantry, and sent over to Germany.

CJ: So you think the CC's prepared you for, for the military?

EM: Well um, they did, yeah, but I was one, if we get a lesson, we got, got the Board of Education.

CJ: So what was camp life like here?

EM: I like it. Had a lot of fun.

CJ: What kind of things did you do? Did you play sports?

EM: We'd go across the road from the camp, an' play baseball. Until our boss come in, then we had to quit. That's why I can't find that base.

CJ: Really.

EM: Which is right like on a curve.

CJ: Across the Drive?

EM: And the camp is on this side. And where we played is on that side.

CJ: Hmm. Maybe Mr. Engle would be able to help you out, to tell you exactly where the camp was. Because he probably knows. But did you ever go down to town on the weekends?

EM: Go down to town, yeah.

CJ: What'd you do down there?

EM: Well, the first time we went down, it's funny in a way, uh, we was told, when you go down in town, not to say anything about who won the war. They warned us on that. Cause uh, at that time when the South was pretty strong against the North yet.

CJ: Do you mean being from Pennsylvania?

EM: Yeah.

CJ: That's interesting. So you didn't say anything?

EM: I never went looking for trouble. I never said anything?

CJ: Was there a lot of uh, or was there any trouble between Pennsylvania boys and Virginia boys?

EM: Not that I know of. They all listened to what they were told.

CJ: Were they good friends?

EM: Yeah. But...goin' down town.

CJ: Going down town. And what was your, so you didn't say anything about ?

EM: No.

CJ: being from the North, or, or winning the war?

EM: Winning the war.

CJ: Um, go ahead.

EM: I, I was never brought up to do that.

CJ: A little, touchy subject, and still is in some areas.

EM: Yeah, yeah in some areas yeah.

CJ: So what did you gain from CCC? What was?

EM: Well, it uh, I, I can put it this way: I wish they had it goin' today. Cause if it's going today, a lot of these young teenagers wouldn't be the way they are today.

CJ: Mm hmm.

EM: An' that's the way I see it.

CJ: But do you think it would work when there's no Depression?

EM: Well,

CJ: Did the Depression help it work?

EM: Yeah, it'd be uh, more or less a responsibility on yourself.

CJ: Right. Would you do it over again?

EM: Yeah.

CJ: You would? So your older brother was in? No?

EM: No, I'm the oldest.

CJ: You're the oldest? Ok. And did anyone else in your family go CC?

EM: No. No.

CJ: Just you. Is there anything else you can think, or little stories, or?

EM: All the tricks we was pulling on each other.

CJ: Tell me about it.

EM: Uh, when the new ones come in, we'd take the sheets, pull it halfway up, make it look like a full sheet, and the guy's get in and right down to the sheet. Another time, they put cornflakes in the bed. Another time they put a little non-poisonous snake in the bed.

CJ: Really?

EM: An' take the guy's bed and put it up in the rafters.

CJ: That sounds kind of mean.

EM: But there's one thing happened that uh, I didn't go wrong with. That's when they got one of these blue racers. We call 'em black snakes, but down here they call them blue racers.

CJ: Mm hmm.

EM: They got one, it was pretty big, I'd say it was about that long. And they were teasing it. And I was brought up that you never tease anything, no matter what it is. And I couldn't see, I say, tell them about teasing it and all, and then I walked away. And then it would up that when they got done playing with it and teasing it, why then they killed it.

CJ: Never kill a black snake, they're too good.

EM: No, and they're protected too, see.

CJ: Did you know Mr. Pollock?

EM: No.

CJ: You didn't know him? Never heard any?

EM: Well, I might have known him, but it's over 60 years ago.

CJ: The man that, that ran the uh, the camp here at Skyland, the Stonyman Camp. He always played his bugle. He was in charge of? You didn't know him?

EM: No.

CJ: You didn't hear his bugle playing?

EM: I think it could be a bugle.

CJ: You do? What about any of the mountain families? Anyone who lived here, did you ever meet up with any of them?

EM: Not that I know of.

CJ: No? Well by '39 I guess most of them would have moved out.

EM: Mm hmm. But see I's only here 3 months, didn't take enough time to get to know them. Like this one picture I showed you here, that big one with the 4 fellows on it. Uh, one fellow here, he's uh, he's a Polish kid, but yet he's named [??], he said I can't begin to pronounce it.

CJ: Alright, well thank you so much for taking the time to sit down and talk with me. I appreciate it.

